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THE CONFERENCE ON GEOGRAPHICAL EDUCATION HELD DURING THE TRANSCONTINENTAL EXCURSION OF 1912

Toward the end of the Transcontinental Excursion of the American Geographical Society, on October 12, 1912, a conference on geographical education was held on the initiative of Professor W. M. Davis at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. This was a fitting corollary to the other activities of the excursion, for the majority of its members were educators and the advancement of geography through personal contact between European and American geographers was one of its main objects. Five European geographers made addresses on the teaching of geography in the universities of their respective countries; two American geographers were to make similar addresses on the status of geographical education in this country, but were prevented by lack of time. The European geographers who spoke were: Professor Joseph Partsch of the University of Leipzig; Professor Lucien Gallois of the University of Paris; Professor Eugen Oberhummer of the University of Vienna; Professor George G. Chisholm of the University of Edinburgh; and Professor Emile Chaix of the University of Geneva. The two American geographers who were unable to speak were: Professor Albert P. Brigham of Colgate University, and Professor Mark Jefferson of the State Normal College at Ypsilanti, Michigan. All seven addresses have recently been made accessible in the *Proceedings of the Philosophical Society of the University of Virginia, 1911-1912*, pp. 99-134.

Before introducing the speakers Professor Davis made a few remarks in which he pointed out that the standard of a subject in elementary and secondary schools is dependent on the status of that subject in the higher institutions of learning; hence the necessity of developing geography as a university subject in this country if we wish to improve its condition in the schools.

Professor Partsch in his address referred to the fact—which is not familiar to all who know of the present advanced development of the subject in Germany—that geography began to be recognized as a university subject in Germany only about forty years ago. Now every one of the eighteen universities has its chair of geography and several of the *Technische- and Handelshochschulen* as well as the *Kolonialinstitut* of Hamburg have special geographical professorships. In all there are 29 professors and 15 instructors (*privatdozenten*) of geography at German universities. Professor Partsch then spoke of the methods of instruction. Each university has its geographical institute; its equipment depends on the size of the endowment. As a rule the equipment consists of a collection of simple surveying instruments, and facilities for map drawing and cartometry; a collection of illustrative material such as maps, models, photographs and lantern-slides; and a library of text-books, handbooks and geographical journals.¹ Instruction is given by means of lectures, seminar work and field excursions.

¹ Cf. also "Die geographischen Institute der deutschen Universitäten" by F. Regel, *Geogr. Anzeiger*, Vol. 10, 1909, pp. 149-158, 177-184, and 212-213.

Professor Gallois's address, while dealing with the teaching of geography, gave a welcome insight into the French educational system, a somewhat confusing subject to those who are not familiar with it. Geographical instruction along modern lines dates back to the reorganization of the French universities, thirty years ago. The traditional combination of history and geography led to assigning the chair of geography in each university to the *Faculté des Lettres*. Nevertheless, the subject is taught throughout on the basis of natural science. At the University of Paris a professorship of physical geography was created about twenty-five years ago under the *Faculté des Sciences*, so that at this institution physical geography is represented in both faculties, inasmuch as physical as well as human geography is taught in the *Faculté des Lettres*.

The great majority of students of geography at French universities intend to become teachers in state secondary schools, or *lycées*, and geography is associated with history in these schools. The course of study usually covers four years or more, two for the *license*, one for the *diplôme d'études*, and one or more for the *agrégation*. While all three of these certificates—for they are not, strictly speaking, university degrees—are conferred for studies in geography and history together, the elective character of the examinations for the first two allows the candidate to devote himself almost exclusively to geographical subjects, if he so desires. The *agrégation*, however, which is a difficult competitive examination to fill vacancies in the secondary schools (there are only about 10 to 18 a year) lays great stress on history, the written examination comprising three papers in this subject and one in geography. Those who intend to become university professors may dispense with these three certificates; they must, however, have the doctor's degree. The only condition imposed upon a candidate for this degree is the writing of an original thesis on some subject accepted by the faculty. The thesis always requires several years of work; it is not a student's essay but an original piece of work representing a substantial contribution to science. For those, especially foreigners, who wish to acquire an academic degree which does not lead to a state position and who wish to devote less time to its acquisition, a so-called *doctorat d'université* has been created comparatively recently, for which a thesis of the same character but less comprehensive in scope is required.

In his remarks on geographical instruction in Austria, Professor Oberhummer called attention to the identity in development and organization, due to historical reasons, of the Austrian and German universities. No extended reference to the geographical work given in the former need therefore be made here. One innovation may be noted, however. In 1885, the chair of geography at the University of Vienna was divided into two chairs of equal rank, one for physical geography and one for political or historical geography, in recognition of the fact that the subject was too comprehensive to be taught by one man alone. The total number of geographical instructors at the higher institutions of learning of Austria is 16, viz. 10 professors (including one at the *Exportakademie* in Vienna) and 6 *privatdozenten*. Briefly alluding to secondary education, Professor Oberhummer pointed out a recent advance in the status of geography in the Austrian schools. While heretofore in the *gymnasien* (which represent the most important class of secondary schools) geography was confined to the four lower (out of a total of nine) classes, as it still is in this type of school in Germany, the subject has recently been added to the curri-

culum of the upper classes, so that there will be no break in the course of study for those who wish to pursue the subject later on at the university.

The next speaker, Professor Chisholm, gave an interesting historical account of the development of geography in the British universities. The first successful movement made with a view to getting university recognition for the subject was made by the Royal Geographical Society of London in 1885. Dr. J. Scott Keltie, its present secretary and at that time sub-editor of *Nature*, was commissioned to investigate geographical instruction on the Continent. His well-known report² greatly stimulated the agitation for the movement. Not long after, in 1887 and 1888, respectively, readerships were founded at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the Royal Geographical Society making in each case a contribution to the salary of the reader. Since then the recognition of the subject in British universities has steadily increased. It is still best represented, however, at Oxford. The course given there at the well-known School of Geography under the direction of Professor A. J. Herbertson requires two years of study and leads to a university diploma in geography. The curriculum embraces the whole field of general geography and the outlines of the regional geography of the world, with special emphasis on the British Empire. The examination for the diploma, besides covering these subjects, includes the preparation, based on the literature available and on personal observation, of a systematic regional treatment of a small area, usually the area comprised in a sheet of the one-inch-to-the-mile map of the British Ordnance Survey, and calls for a special knowledge of two subjects to be selected by the candidate from the following: detailed regional geography of some country; climatology; geomorphology; biogeography; economic and political geography; modern historical geography; ancient historical geography; and history of geography. The teaching staff of the school now comprises three persons, in addition to its head, who give their whole time to it; there are also a lecturer on ancient historical geography and an instructor in surveying. The students are mainly school teachers, many of them graduates, but there are also intending candidates for the Indian Civil Service and other examinations.

There is a similar school of geography at Cambridge, with two readers; the requirements for the diploma do not, however, include the preparation of a geographical monograph.

In no other British university is any special qualification in geography granted. The subject, where it is recognized at all, is recognized only as one of several subjects included in the examination for a degree, whether in science or arts.

Of the newer universities of England the University of London, since its reorganization as a teaching body, has, however, devoted considerable attention to geography. There are now at least four recognized teachers of the subject at the constituent or affiliated institutions, viz., two at the London School of Economics (Professor H. J. Mackinder is head of the department), one at University College and one at Bedford College. In 1912 the University of London conferred for the first time in any British university the degree of

²Geographical Education: Report to the Council of the Royal Geographical Society, London (Murray), 1886. Summary in the *Report of the Commissioner of Education for 1896-97*, Vol. 2, pp. 1475-1493, Washington, 1898.

Doctor of Science in geography, for a thesis on the "Climatic Limits of Wheat Cultivation."³

The remaining universities at which geography is represented are: Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, University College of Reading, Birmingham, University of Wales at Aberystwyth, Edinburgh and Glasgow. In spite of a movement started in 1884 by the Scottish Geographical Society for the establishment of a professorship at Edinburgh, the recognition of the subject by the Scotch universities is of relatively recent date, the lectureships in geography at Edinburgh and Glasgow having been founded in 1908 and 1909, respectively.

The last of the addresses on geographical instruction in Europe was that by Professor Chaix on Switzerland. Of the seven Swiss universities, Bern, Lausanne, Fribourg, and Geneva pay most attention to geography. The department at Bern has been particularly well developed by recent incumbents. In Lausanne anthropogeography is especially well represented, in Fribourg detailed topographic surveying as a basis to physiographic interpretation. In Geneva the subject is divided between the Faculties of Science and of Social Science, physical geography being taught in the former, economic geography in the latter.

The two addresses by American geographers, which could not be presented orally because of lack of time, deal with geographical instruction in the United States. Professor Brigham, in his address, first reviews the status of geography in our universities. The subject is there generally under the wing of geology, and hence physical geography, and especially physiography, are more fully developed than other phases. However, there is a widening conviction that geography is a worthy subject that should be represented in the university curriculum. Although even some of our major universities still wholly ignore the subject, there are a score or two that have been distinctly impressed by the geographical progress of the past twenty-five years. Among these may be mentioned Chicago, Yale, Harvard, Pennsylvania, Columbia, Wisconsin, Cornell, Nebraska and California. Chicago has four teachers of geography of professorial rank and offers more than twenty courses, including the principles of geography, climatology, cartography, anthropogeography and regional geography of various units. Yale offers courses in physical and commercial geography, anthropogeography and regional geography of the continents, except Australia and Africa. Aside from physiography Harvard's most geographical courses are given under climatology; there is also a course on the economic geography of South America. At the University of Pennsylvania the economic phase is emphasized, such subjects as transportation, resources, industry and commerce having the chief place. Geography at Columbia is mainly represented at Teachers College, where the pedagogical aspect of the subject is naturally given most attention. Both Wisconsin and Cornell relate their work intimately with geology but are giving increasing attention to human relations, especially in the economic field. Nebraska and California both offer a considerable range of geographical work, the latter having a distinct department of geography, not associated with the geological department. Several other colleges and universities treat geography to a limited degree, not because the subject appeals to the governing bodies or to the faculties as a whole but be-

³ Published in the *Geogr. Journ.*, Vol. 29, 1912, pp. 347-366 and 421-426.

cause of the special interest of instructors. To these belong Northwestern, Oberlin, Denison, Syracuse, Beloit, Williams, Wesleyan, Brown and Colgate. In spite of this lesser development of geography at America, as compared with European universities, it must not be inferred that progress is small or that hope is to be too long deferred, for there is a prevailing admission that a new geography has come and that the doors of the higher schools must open to it.

After referring to the influence of the Association of American Geographers, through its professional membership, on high geographical standards in this country, Professor Brigham in conclusion makes an appeal for a wider recognition of geography because of its cultural value. That all should know geography appears in the universal recognition of it as a cardinal subject in the lower schools. And yet there are some high in educational administration who suppose it may be finished in the sixth grade and that the boy of twelve may be turned loose with all needed knowledge of the world in which he is to live and work. More than elementary training is imperative for many kinds of people. Students and teachers of history and economics, business men, journalists, members of the consular service, and public men in general—all can be benefited by geographical training. Experience shows with woeful certainty that such knowledge does not come by accident, or by unconscious daily absorption from books, newspapers and people.

Professor Jefferson, in his address, mainly traces the development of geographical instruction in our secondary schools. The interest in the geological aspect of the subject was reflected in the report of the Committee of Ten of the National Education Association in 1892.⁴ It was characteristic that the committee thought physiography essential in the high schools if elementary school instruction in geography was to be saved from perishing. It thought something might be done towards this end by introducing courses in geology into the high schools until teachers could be trained in the new physical geography. The geography conference of that committee did recognize other aspects of geography than the rational explanation of land forms—calling them applied geography—but thought they ought to be taught in connection with the sciences to which they were most intimately related, as botany, or zoology, or history. Of human relations no notice was taken in the report of the Committee of Ten, but when the attempt was made to introduce physiography into the schools, the publishers, closely in touch with the schools, at once insisted on bringing “man” in to an extent that grew from year to year. The subsequent reaction of the schools on the university authors may be interestingly studied in the succession of text books for high school use that at once began to appear. Each successive book and each successive edition of each book was marked by more of “life” and “man.” Taking the secondary school books on geography that have appeared since 1895 in groups of five years, the categories represented were as follows: 1895-1899, 3 physical geographies; 1900-1904, 4 physical geographies, 2 laboratory manuals and 5 commercial geographies (in the Committee of Ten’s report commercial geography was not even named); 1905-1909, 4 physical geographies, 4 laboratory manuals and 1 commercial geography. In the last three years (1910-1912) there have appeared 1 physi-

⁴ Cf. *Report of the Commissioner of Education for 1892-93*, Vol. 2, pp. 1415-1448, Washington, 1895; specifically on geography, pp. 1430-1432.

cal geography, 2 commercial geographies and three books attempting to meet the demand for some form of geography for high schools confessedly going beyond physical geography to the activities of man as a chief object rather than as an incident. In this movement the *Journal of Geography* has been an important medium for the discussion and shaping of new policies.⁵

From this summary of the addresses presented it will be apparent that the conference was a noteworthy event in the domain of educational geography in this country. On no previous occasion, it may safely be said, has a comparison of American and European educational methods in geography been presented so forcefully and authoritatively. This comparison in itself is a source of great promise; for the exchange of ideas, the intellectual contact so felicitously established by the Transcontinental Excursion, cannot but benefit the development of geography in the United States.

⁵On the development of geographical instruction in the United States, see also Prof. C. R. Dryer's recent paper "The New Departure in Geography," *Journ. of Geogr.*, Vol. 11, 1912-13, pp. 145-151 and 177-180. Foreign comment will be found in "Amerikanische Lehrbücher für den Geographie-Unterricht" by M. Krug(-Genthe), *Geogr. Zeitschr.*, Vol. 4, 1898, pp. 274-287, and "Die Geographie in den Vereinigten Staaten" by the same, *ibid.*, Vol. 9, 1903, pp. 626-637 and 666-685; and "Geographie und Geographieunterricht in den Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika" by K. L. Henning, *Deutsche Rundschau für Geogr.*, Vol. 35, 1912-13, pp. 446-455 and 494-500.